

active interest in this important issue by co-sponsoring this common sense measure—the Community Solvency Act of 1995.

## IT IS TIME FOR TRUTH IN VOTING

### HON. MICHAEL D. CRAPO

OF IDAHO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, January 4, 1995*

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the toughest and most comprehensive internal reforms in over 50 years in this House. An open Congress is the only way to restore a sense of public confidence in our legislative process. I urge Members on both sides of the aisle to support this Contract for a People's House.

When our constituents recently sent us to Washington as Members of the 104th Congress, they demanded that we change the way business is done. The past 2 years, however, have allowed little room for a more open and accountable process for Members of either party in Congress. What a remarkable opportunity it is then, to bring a breath of fresh air to the current business of the House through reforms of the committee system, House rules, and budget process. We are now making substantial progress in achieving the goal of comprehensive congressional reform that we promised to the American people. Gone are the days of ghost voting by proxy in committee, closed committee meetings that shut out the American people as well as other Members of Congress, and budget numbers that do not honestly reflect increases from year to year. And I am proud to say that the Speaker will institute a program to make the House electronically accessible to everyone. These reforms are just the beginning of a new House.

To supplement the already substantial list of reforms that are being proposed and debated today, I am reintroducing the Truth In Voting Act. Reintroduction of this legislation comes at a critical time now that we have more opportunity to end the manipulative procedures, sham votes, and secret meetings of the old process. This legislation would codify and clarify many of the fine reforms being debated today, and it keeps alive the perennial process of self-examination and reform that brings vitality to representative government. I urge my colleagues to support the Truth In Voting Act, and reforms that will lead this House into the 21st century.

## CHILD SUPPORT

### HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, January 4, 1995*

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert my Washington report for Wednesday, December 7, 1994, into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

## CHILD SUPPORT

Many Hoosiers speak to me about the difficulty they have collecting child support. The failure to obtain adequate support from absent parents can place an enormous financial strain on families. Children need a stable family environment in which to grow and

thrive, and too many children simply do not receive the support they need. We must insist that parents treat their children responsibly, including their economic needs. Children do best when they have financial as well as emotional support from both parents. Congress will likely address this issue during debate on welfare reform next year.

## BACKGROUND

The states generally handle divorce, custody, and child support decisions. In order to obtain child support, the custodial parent must obtain a state court order specifying the amount to be paid by the noncustodial parent.

Collection of that court-ordered support is not always easy. Almost one-quarter of American children grow up in single-parent households, and many of them do not receive financial support from the absent parent. Over 40% of single mothers have no child support order in place and, therefore, no legal right to support. Single parents who do have support orders in place were entitled to a total of \$20 billion last year, but received only \$13 billion. Furthermore, many families find the support payments inadequate. In 1989, the average child support payment was about \$250 per month.

There are several hurdles which make collection of child support difficult. First, non-custodial parents who move frequently can be difficult to locate. Second, if paternity is not established—as is the case in two-thirds of births to unmarried parents—children have no legal claim on their father's income. Third, collection of child support can be difficult or expensive, particularly for the custodial parent who must go to court. Child support can be collected through wage withholding from parents with steady jobs, but those who change jobs frequently or are self-employed sometimes evade traditional enforcement methods. Fourth, there is often confusion about which state's courts have jurisdiction in child support disputes. Over 30% of children live in a different state than their non-custodial parent.

## FEDERAL EFFORTS

In 1975, Congress established a cooperative federal-state Child Support Enforcement (CSE) program. Welfare recipients are required to participate in the program, and most of the support collected for their children is used by the government for welfare payments. Families not on welfare may receive CSE services for a small fee. The CSE program currently handles about half of all child support cases, and provides a variety of services:

Parent location: The Federal Parent Locator Service uses a variety of government records to locate parents, including information from the Social Security Administration and the IRS. States also conduct searches through their records, including motor vehicle registries and criminal records. In 1993, 4.5 million absent parents were located, an increase of 21% over the year before.

Paternity establishment: Although primarily a state responsibility, the federal government has required states to emphasize establishing paternity for children born out of wedlock. For example, the federal government has required states to have all parties in a contested paternity case submit to a genetic test upon request, and to accept paternity determinations made by other states. Despite these efforts, a paternity establishment remains a weak link in child support enforcement. In 1993, paternity was established for over 550,000 children, a 7% increase from the previous year. However, this left almost three million children still lacking legal identification of their father.

Collection: Most child support is gathered through wage withholding and garnishing

federal and state income tax refunds and unemployment compensation. In 1993, \$8.9 billion was collected through the CSE program, an increase of 12% over the year before. The amount of child support collected through wage withholding should increase since federal law requires mandatory withholding for all child support orders issued or modified after January 1, 1994.

## REFORM PROPOSALS

Improving child support enforcement is primarily a state function, but the federal government can play an important role. Congress has taken steps to improve child support enforcement. It approved measures this year which require states to report parents owing at least two months of child support to consumer credit agencies; designate child support payments priority debts when an individual files for bankruptcy; restrict a state court's ability to modify a child support order issued by another state without the consent of the child and custodial parent; and make parents who fail to pay child support ineligible for federal small business loans.

While plugging these loopholes in the child support enforcement system is useful, it is clear that more comprehensive improvements are needed. First, more emphasis must be placed on identifying fathers of children. Some states have been very successful—up to 85% of the time—while others have been woefully inattentive to this matter. Some propose withholding welfare benefits for children whose paternity is not documented. Second, more effective methods of collecting child support are needed. Some states already require new employees to report their child support obligations to employers so that their payments may be automatically withheld from their paycheck. One suggestion is to make this requirement national through the W-4 tax form. I prefer that the states remain in control, but with support from the federal government in doing those things states are unable to do. The child support system will work better if the laws and procedures are more uniform and less complex.

## CONCLUSION

I think that most parents genuinely want to take care of their children, and millions of noncustodial parents do pay their child support fully and regularly. But too many children do not receive adequate support. The federal government can help ensure their parents live up to their obligations. The goal in child support must be to improve the economic security of all children. Our society's failure to consistently demand that parents treat their children responsibly has taken its toll in childhood poverty and welfare dependency.

## A TRIBUTE TO JUDITH PISAR AND THE AMERICAN CENTER OF PARIS

### HON. CHARLES E. SCHUMER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, January 4, 1995*

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call the attention of my colleagues to the achievements of a great American woman, born in the Ninth Congressional District of New York.

Judith Pisar, who was installed last year as a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor of France, has spent more than two decades building cultural bridges between the Americans and the